AIX-EN-PROVENCE, France (CNS)—The French nun who believes she was healed of Parkinson’s disease thanks to Pope John Paul II said her life had “totally changed” since that night two months after the pope’s death.

Sister Marie-Simon-Pierre, 46, is working again, now in Paris at a maternity hospital, operated by her order, the Little Sisters of Catholic Motherhood.

She met reporters on March 30 in Aix-en-Provence during a press conference with Archbishop Claude Feidt of Aix, the archdiocese where the cure took place.

“I was sick and now I am cured,” she told reporters. “I am cured, but it is up to the Church to say whether it was a miracle or not.”

However, she said she knows it is well and that she must continue her work “to serve life and to serve the family.”

Diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease in 2001, she said that, while watching Pope John Paul deteriorate from the effects of Parkinson’s disease, “I saw myself in the years to come.”

By June 2, the religious has said, she was struggling to write, to walk and to function normally.

She said she went to bed that night and woke up very early the next morning feeling completely different.

“I was sure I was healed,” she said.

In a March 29 statement, Archbishop Feidt said that after hearing about the alleged healing of Sister Marie-Simon-Pierre he decided to conduct “a thorough investigation” to determine whether it might be the miracle needed for Pope John Paul’s beatification.

In general, the Church must confirm two miracles through the intercession of the sainthood candidate before canonization.

The archbishop said the investigation took a year to complete.

The postulator of Pope John Paul’s sainthood cause, Msgr. Slawomir Oder, said the investigation included testimony from theologians and canon lawyers, physicians, a psychiatrist and a handwriting expert since the legibility of a patient’s handwriting is used as an indicator of the progress of Parkinson’s disease.

Archbishop Feidt and Sister Marie-Simon-Pierre attended the April 2 ceremony in Rome marking the end of the diocesan phase of Pope John Paul’s cause and the memorial that Mass Pope Benedict XVI celebrated to mark the second anniversary of his predecessor’s death.

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Pope: John Paul’s ministry, agony showed his love of Christ

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope John Paul II’s intense pastoral ministry, “but even more, the Calvary of agony and the serene death of our beloved pope let all people of our age know that Jesus Christ really was his everything,” Pope Benedict XVI said.

Pope Benedict marked the second anniversary of Pope John Paul’s death by celebrating a memorial Mass on the evening of April 2 at St. Peter’s Square. The pope said his predecessor truly fit the biblical description of a “servant of God,” which is the way the Church officially refers to him while “his process of beatification quickly progresses.”

Pope Benedict, who had set aside the five-year waiting period usually required before a sainthood cause begins, told tens of thousands of people in St. Peter’s Square that the initial, diocesan phase of Pope John Paul’s cause had concluded earlier in the day. While the Church has not solemnly proclaimed Pope John Paul a saint in heaven, Pope Benedict said he is certain that “our beloved John Paul II” continues to accompany the Church with his prayers.

At the same time, he offered prayers that Pope John Paul, “our father, brother and friend,” would enjoy eternal rest and peace in the company of God.

The pope praised his predecessor’s ability to share with the world his faith, hope and charity, even as Parkinson’s disease gradually made it impossible for him to walk and, ultimately, to talk.

“Especially with the slow, but relentless progression of his illness, which little by little stripped him of everything, he made himself an offering to Christ, a living proclamation of his Passion, in a hope filled with faith in the Resurrection,” Pope Benedict said.

Pope John Paul’s divine master, he lived his agony in prayer,” the pope said. “He died praying. Truly, he fell asleep in the Lord.”

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Pope John Paul II looked at the faithful gathered at the Colosseum during the traditional Via Crucis (Way of the Cross) Good Friday service in Rome on April 18, 2003, file photo.

Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz, Pope John Paul’s personal secretary for nearly 40 years.

Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz of Krakow, Poland, prays at the tomb of Pope John Paul II’s at the Basilica of St John Lateran in Rome on April 2, the anniversary of the Polish pope’s death.

At the same time, he said, “an ad hoc commission of experts with scientists and physicians of every religious orientation, even nonbelievers,” will be convened to study the records and testimony collected in the case of Sister Marie-Simon-Pierre.

“It will be up to them to establish whether or not it is a healing that is scientifically inexplicable,” the cardinal said. “Only in the light of this scientific pronouncement will a later commission of cardinals declare whether it is a miracle that can be attributed to the intercession of Pope John Paul II.”

A declaration of heroic virtues and recognition of a miracle usually are needed before beatification. In the usual process, canonization requires another miracle attributed to the candidate’s intervention after the beatification.

Pope Benedict XVI said he is certain that “our beloved John Paul II” continues to accompany the Church with his prayers.

Four cardinals, including Cardinal Jose Saraiva Martins, congregation prefect, said that unless or until he hears otherwise from the pope, the congregation will continue the process according to established Church law: first, studying the documentation gathered by the Diocese of Rome and assisting with the drafting of a “positio,” or position paper, outlining how Pope John Paul II heroically lived the Christian virtues.

The 15 cardinals and 15 bishops who are members of the congregation will study the “positio” and forward their opinion to the pope, he told the newspaper La Repubblica.

Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz of Krakow, Poland, prays at the tomb under St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican on April 2, the anniversary of the Polish pope’s death.

Cardinal Dziwisz served as Pope John Paul’s personal secretary for nearly 40 years.

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Parish Diary/Father Peter J. Daly

Going green to become better stewards of creation

Our parish is going green. Not just for St. Patrick’s Day. Not just for spring. We are going green for good.

This Lent, we took on a new spiritual discipline. In addition to the usual disciplines, we are trying to become better stewards of God’s creation.

It is something that is long overdue—for the Church and for our society.

This year, our parish council set up a committee to look at all aspects of our parish life in relation to the environment. I had read about a parish in Michigan that set up a similar committee. They even started producing wind power and using solar panels to heat water.

We are an average-size Catholic parish for my diocese with about 1,100 families and around 1,300 people. We are not “Big Foot” in our environmental impact, but we are nonetheless significant.

Our activities generate a lot of trash. We fill a dumpster every week. We use hundreds of Styrofoam cups and plates every week. Our five buildings use thousands of dollars worth of electricity and heating fuel every month. Sometimes we overheat and overuse air-conditioning.

We have run-off water from our parking lots, lawns and fields that pollute the local watershed. We could cut down on fertilizer. We have a lot of land in forest and wetlands (over 60 acres). We could plant more trees and protect the ones we already have.

I do not think we are major polluters, but we are typical Americans. And being typical Americans means we use more of the earth’s resources than most people.

It is time for us to do something to counter this.

So we put together a committee of parishioners who have a concern for the environment and real expertise. The chairman, Dr. Bob Ulanowicz, is a well-known biologist.

We gave them a commission that includes some short-term and long-term tasks:

• They are to look into ways to reduce our energy consumption and thereby our carbon “footprint” (including our vehicles).
• They are to address recycling of paper and other waste, and explore ways to avoid generating any nonbiodegradable waste.
• They are looking for alternatives to chemical fertilizers, and ways to preserve our wetlands and forest lands.

• For the long term, they will recommend changes to our heating and cooling plants. We might even put in solar panels to heat water and exhaust vents to cool buildings.

• We will look at ways of educating the parish to be better stewards of the environment. One suggestion we already have is to sell canvas tote bags to parishioners so we don’t have to use so many plastic bags at the store.

• Why should a Catholic parish do this? Our theology tells us about our relationship to nature. While Genesis says that we should “fill the earth and subdue it” (Gen 1:28), we do not have a license to ruin it. Each of us is just “passing through” this earth. Our true home is in the next life. That makes us the “stewards” (temporary custodians) of the environment, not the “masters” (owners) of creation.

So we are going to try our best to go green.

There are some folks who are disturbed by this, but not many. Most parishioners see the wisdom and the necessity of being better stewards.

One happy bonus of going green is that it will save some green. Just adjusting our thermostats and replacing incandescent light bulbs with cool fluorescent bulbs will save a few thousand dollars in the first year.

From now on, our parish is going green.

(Father Peter Daly writes for Catholic News Service.)

Editorial

We hope you will take this Good Friday to meditate on the Passion and death of Jesus. You could use the sorrowful mysteries of the rosary as a guide or perhaps Jesus’ seven last words. Or you could say the Way of the Cross. Here are a couple sentences on each station to get you started:

Station I: Jesus is condemned to death. The Gospels say that the Jewish leaders incited a crowd to pressure Pontius Pilate into condemning Jesus.

Station II: Jesus receives the cross. As Jesus is tied to the crossbeam of the cross, he already has blood trickling down his face from his head crowned with thorns, and his whole body has received a cruel scourging. Pilate had said, “Ecce homo!” (“Behold the man.”)

Station III: Jesus falls the first time. With his arms tied to the crossbeam across his shoulders, Jesus can’t even catch himself when he falls—and the Roman soldiers make sure he falls by giving him a little shove.

Station IV: Jesus meets his Blessed Mother. Imagine the anguish that Mary felt when she met Jesus in his pitiful condition, knowing that he was about to die a horrible death. And the torment for Jesus was increased when he saw how much his mother was suffering.

Station V: Simon helps Jesus carry the cross. This Cyrenian, forced to carry the cross when it appeared that Jesus might die before reaching Calvary, had no wish to do so. How long did he resent being forced to do this? We don’t know. St. Mark simply says that his sons were Alexander and Rufus, apparently members of the Christian community.

Station VI: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus. Tradition has bequeathed us Veronica, a name that means “true image” because of likeness of Jesus remained on the towel she used. She is apparently a counterpart to the man who helped Jesus carry his cross.

Station VII: Jesus falls the second time. Jesus falls again in a narrow street of Jerusalem where thousands of people are busy preparing for Passover.

Station VIII: Jesus speaks to the women of Jerusalem. At least some of the people are aware of what is happening and are sad. Jesus tells them, “Don’t weep for me, but for yourselves and for your children.” He calls for true repentance.

Station IX: Jesus falls the third time. Let’s remember who is falling. His nature was divine, but he did not cling to his equality with God. Jesus humbled himself to become a man and, taking on human nature, he accepted death on a cross.

Station X: Jesus is stripped of his garments. This is still another humiliation inflicted by the Romans, stripping him naked before crucifying him.

Station XI: Jesus is nailed to the cross. Pinned immobile in a terrible position, legs bent so he could push himself up to breathe, Jesus is nailed to the cross like a mere thing. As the soldiers do their work, Jesus prays, “Father, forgive them because they do not know what they are doing.”

Station XII: Jesus dies on the cross. Penned immobile in a terrible miserable manner, Jesus dies. But look, too, at what we have done to our God.

Station XIII: Jesus dies on the cross. Penned immobile in a terrible miserable manner, Jesus dies. But look, too, at what we have done to our God.

Station XIV: Jesus is laid in the tomb. In a tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea, Jesus’ body is hastily laid to rest. Jesus, a human like us and the Son of God, has conquered death with death.

— John F. Fink

Church Facts

Declaring Approval

Percent of American adults who say they approve of the way Bush is handling his job...

Source: Gallup Poll
Easter is the pre-eminent feast of hope.

The Criterion Friday, April 6, 2007

ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO DANIEL M. BUECHLEIN, O.S.B.

Easter is the pre-eminent feast of hope. For those who face death with fear, Jesus showed once and for all that in death, life is changed and not taken away. Once more with peaceful hearts, we thank God for the gift of our Easter faith! Thank God for the gift of our Church, which carries forward the Easter mystery in the life of the sacraments and our community of faith even in the midst of suffering that will pass away.

God bless you and yours with the happiest Easter ever! 

Do you have an intention for Archbishop Buechlein’s prayer list? You may mail it to him at: 

Archbishop Buechlein’s Prayer List
Archidioceze de Indianapolis
1400 N. Meridian St.
P.O. Box 1410
Indianapolis, IN 46202-1410

La Pascua es la festividad de esperanza más importante. Jesús demostró definitivamente que por medio de la muerte la vida simplemente cambia, no desaparece.

Una vez más con corazones serenos, ¡le damos gracias a Dios por el obsequio de fe pascual! ¡Gracias a Dios por el obsequio de su propio Hijo y por la victoria pascual de Cristo! Le damos gracias a Dios por el obsequio de nuestra Iglesia que transmite el misterio pascual en la vida de los sacramentos y nuestra comunidad de fe, en medio del sufrimiento que también pasarán.

¿Que Dios los bendiga a todos con la Pascua más alegra? 

Tiene una intención que desee incluir en la lista de oración del Arzobispo Buechlein? Puede enviar su correspondencia a: 

Lista de oración del Arzobispo Buechlein
Archidiócesis de Indianapolis
1400 N. Meridian St.
P.O. Box 1410
Indianapolis, IN 46202-1410

Traducido por: Language Training Center, Indianapolis

La intención del Arzobispo Buechlein para vocaciones en abril

Sacerdotes: Que ellos realicen sus promesas como sacerdotes con jubilo y fe y den ánimo a otros hombres para que contesten la llamada de Dios al sacerdocio.
Events Calendar

April 6

April 7
St. Gabriel the Archangel Parish, 555 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. Burial services, 8 p.m. Information: 812-346-8011 or sue@thdeanery.org.

April 9
St. Athanasius the Great Byzantine Church, 1171 Blaine Ave., Indianapolis. Resurrection Matins, 8 p.m. Information: 317-632-4157.

April 9
Second Sundays

April 11
St. Mary of the Purification Parish, 5015 Harrison St., Indianapolis. Eucharist Exposition, 6-8 p.m. Information: 317-356-4396, Toll Free 1-866-374-3921.

April 11
Our Lady of Peace Cemetery, 9700 Allisonville Road, Indianapolis. Holy Hour, 6-8 p.m. Information: 317-784-5454.

April 11
St. Athanasius the Great Byzantine Church, St. Mary Hall, 1171 Blaine Ave., Indianapolis. Catholic Charismatic Renewal of Central Indiana, praise, worship and healing prayers, 7:15-8:45 p.m. Information: 317-592-1991 or www.inholyspirit.org or e-mail lumen_dei@sbcglobal.net.

April 12
St. Athanasius the Great Byzantine Church, 1171 Blaine Ave., Indianapolis. Ancient Healing and Parishal Service, 7:30-8:30 p.m. Information: 317-632-4157.

April 12
Second Mondays

April 12
St. Athanasius the Great Byzantine Church, 1171 Blaine Ave., Indianapolis. Easter Vigil, 9:30 a.m. Information: 317-291-7014.

April 12
St. Athanasius the Great Byzantine Church, 1171 Blaine Ave., Indianapolis. Rose Hours, 7 p.m. Information: 317-632-4157.

April 12
E. Drive, Indianapolis. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, 2-6 p.m. Monday, rosary, 8 p.m. Open until midnight.

April 12

April 12

April 13

April 13
Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Church, 520 Stevens St., Indianapolis. Lumen Dei meeting, Mass, 6:30 a.m., breakfast and program at Priory Hall, 10 members, 15 guests. Information: 317-955-6588 or e-mail Lumen_Dei@brownsville.org.

April 13
Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Church, 520 Stevens St., Indianapolis. Lumen Dei meeting, Mass, 6:30 a.m., breakfast and program at Priory Hall, 10 members, 15 guests. Information: 317-955-6588 or e-mail Lumen_Dei@brownsville.org.

April 14

April 14
Second Saturdays

April 14

April 14

April 14

April 14
Second Mondays

April 14

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Second Mondays

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Second Mondays
Minimum wage bill passes in House, awaits Senate panel vote

By Brigid Curtis Ayer

A bill to raise Indiana’s minimum wage from $5.15 per hour to $7.50 per hour by September 2008 passed the Indiana House by a 71-29 vote and awaits approval by a Senate panel. House Bill 1027, authored by Rep. John Day (D-Indianapolis), would raise Indiana’s minimum hourly wage in three stages. The wage would increase to $6.75 per hour on Sept. 1, 2007, $6.75 per hour on March 1, 2008, and $7.50 per hour on Sept. 1, 2008.

The bill, which received a hearing on March 28 by the Senate Pensions and Labor Committee, drew a large crowd of supporters and opponents. In a letter, Rep. Day gave the 11 members of the Senate Pensions and Labor Committee two reasons why they should support the minimum wage bill. “If Indiana’s wage rates had kept up with the rate of inflation over the past 20 years, it would be $8.50 per hour,” he wrote.

Rep. Day also told panel members that it’s not just young workers working for spending money who are primarily minimum wage earners. A 1998 report by the Congressional Research Service (CRS) said that nationally 36 percent of minimum wage workers are ages 16-19. Sixty percent are adults, and 40 percent of those are the sole wage earner of the family. “This group should be our focus,” Rep. Day wrote.

What’s even more staggering and upsetting is the U.S. has the second highest child poverty rate in the world among developed nations. The only nation which has a higher child poverty rate is Mexico.”

— Beth Mickelson, public policy and legislative specialist for the Children’s Bureau Inc., who also testified in support of the bill, said, “An increase in the minimum wage has a real benefit for families living in poverty, which directly affects the well-being of children. Twenty-two percent, or 49,638, of all Hoosier workers have incomes which put them below the federal poverty rate. This is simply not acceptable for working families.

“What’s even more staggering and upsetting is the U.S. has the second highest child poverty rate in the world among developed nations.” Mickelson said. “The only nation which has a higher child poverty rate is Mexico.”

More than a dozen groups testified in support of the minimum wage bill, including a representative from the Gary chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Lindsey Mintz of the Jewish Community Relations Council and a retired member of the United Auto Workers.

Opponents to the bill, including Rep. Matt Bell, who testified against the bill in both the House and Senate, believe those receiving the minimum wage are typically teens who work so they can have spending money. Bell said that raising the minimum wage will only hurt small businesses, causing some to close, thus eliminating the jobs for people that the bill is trying to help. A representative from the Indiana Chamber of Commerce and one from the Indiana Manufacturers Association also testified against the bill.

But Tebbe told Senate panel members, “Information provided by the census survey of 2006 shows minimum wage earners are not only teenagers. Nearly half, or 48 percent, of minimum wage earners are the household’s chief bread winner, meaning that no higher paid family members live with them.”

The federal minimum wage bill has also passed the U.S. House of Representatives and is awaiting passage in the U.S. Senate. The federal bill would raise the minimum wage in three phases, up to $7.25 per hour by 2009.

Tebbe explained that even if the federal minimum wage is raised, it does not cover thousands of workers in Indiana who do not fall under the federal law.

“Ioindiana needs to set its minimum at a reasonable level to ensure that workers and their families are given the opportunity to access what is needed for one’s material, social and spiritual well-being,” Tebbe said.

Indiana currently has about 1.8 million hourly wage earners. About two percent, or 36,000, of them, make $5.15 per hour or less.

Rep. Day concluded his letter to Senate panel members by saying, “Those who most need the increase cannot hire a lawyer to make their case. They are depending on us.”

Bills must be passed out of committee by April 4 to advance this session.

(Prigid Curtis Ayer is a correspondent for The Criterion.)
Pope asks young people not to lose sight of ‘question of God’

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Celebrating Palm Sunday Mass at the Vatican, Pope Benedict XVI asked young people not to let the question of God drift out of their lives.

The pope opened Holy Week with a procession and Good Friday’s Passion liturgy beneath the eyes of thousands of pilgrims and tourists. The liturgy took place in the sunlit square of St. Peter’s Basilica, where the people of Jerusalem when Jesus arrived in the holy city.

Some 50,000 people crowded into the sunlit square and applauded the pope, who turns 80 on April 16. It was the start of the year’s busiest period of papal liturgies.

In his homily, the pope said Palm Sunday poses an important question for Christians of all ages: “What does it mean, in concrete terms, to ‘follow Christ’?”

If for Christ’s disciples it meant giving up their professions and physically accompanying Christ through the Holy Land, for modern Christians it is a call to interior change, he said.

In short, self-realization ceases to be the most important thing on their mind.

Addressing young people in particular, the pope looked to the liturgy’s processional psalm, which he said suggested two important conditions for those who wish to follow Christ.

First, he said, they must ask themselves about God. Teenage friends, how important is this today not to simply let oneself be drawn here and there in life, not to be satisfied with what everyone thinks and says and does?” he said.

The important thing is to “look around oneself in search of God” and not allow the question of God to “dissolve in our souls,” he said.

The second condition mentioned in the psalm, the pope said, was to have “innocent hands and pure hearts.”

“ Innocent hands are hands that are not used for acts of violence. They are hands that are not defiled by corruption or bribery,” he said.

Pure hearts, the pope said, are those that “do not simulate and are not stained with lies and hypocrisy.”

The pope said the events of Holy Week underline how Christ opened the doors for those who would follow him through the ages—including those who feel indifferent or closed to God.

In effect, the pope said, Jesus on the cross says to all people: If you have trouble seeing God in creation or accepting the message of the Church, then “look at me... and see that I am suffering for your love. Open yourselves to me and to God the Father.”

He noted that many today do follow Christ, often indifferent or closed to God.

Palm Sunday also marked the Church’s celebration of World Youth Day in most countries, and at the end of the liturgy the pope delivered greetings to the young people in seven languages. Each salutation prompted a round of cheesing, chanting, applauding and flag-waving.

“May the great events of Holy Week, in which we see how God acts in our hearts,” the pope said in English, “be a sign of the new life which is given in the Church and in the world through the power of the Holy Spirit.”

“May the grace of the Holy Spirit fill our hearts and our minds with the love of Christ and his truth so we can be a witness of him in the world.”

Pope Benedict XVI
Christ is Risen!

This tapestry of the Resurrection of Christ is on display at the Vatican Museum in Rome. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)
By John F. Fink

My original name was Judas, but I’m never called that. Usually, I’m called Thomas, which comes from the Aramaic word for “twins,” or “Didesimon,” the Greek word for “twins.”

The reason I’m not called Judas is probably obvious because of the notoriety of Judas Iscariot, who betrayed our Lord. Besides, there was another Apostles who was also called Judas.

Unfortunately, I’m well aware of the fact that I’m also referred to as “doubting Thomas,” and I’ll get to that later. In fact, the reason I’m writing this is at least partially to give my side of the story.

Yes, I am one of the Apostles that Jesus named. (I almost said that I’m proud to be an Apostles, but I’m trying to learn humility.) Frankly, when Jesus included me among the 12 it took me by surprise. I had been a friend of Simon, now called Peter, as well as his brother, Andrew, and also James and John, but I never expected to be named an Apostles.

It was Peter who first told me about Jesus and the wonders he was performing. So I became one of his disci- ples, determined to learn as much as possible from this holy man. I began to follow him around Galilee as he preached about the kingdom of God.

Honestly, I was amazed at some of the miracles he per- formed. I wouldn’t have believed them if I hadn’t seen them myself. I guess that has always been one of my traits. I simply have to see something for myself in order to believe it.

In time, I became one of Jesus’ most enthusiastic follow- ers. Just as an example of what I mean, there was the time when Lazarus died. Lazarus was a great friend of Jesus. He lived in Bethany, only a couple of miles from Jerusalem, with his sisters, Martha and Mary.

When Lazarus died in Bethany, we happened to be in Jerusalem for Passover. The people of Jerusalem went out of our wits, ashamed that we had deserted Jesus when he was crucified. But then they said that Jesus had risen from the dead. His mother as well as Mary Magdalene and other women were out of our wits, ashamed that we had deserted Jesus when he needed us, and with no idea what we should do next.

The man we had followed so closely was now dead. His mother as well as Mary Magdalene and other women were at the tomb where he was buried. They did what they could on that Friday night before Passover began, and left him there during Passover itself.

On Sunday morning, I decided that I’d better start making plans to resume the life I had left in Galilee when I started to follow Jesus. I was gone from the house all day so I completely missed what was happening. When I got back late that evening, the others told me the preposterous story that Jesus was no longer dead—that he had been raised from the dead.

First, they told me that Mary Magdalene and other women had found the tomb empty, and that didn’t particularly surprise me. Perhaps the Roman soldiers had removed the body for some reason. But then they said that Jesus had appeared to Mary Magdalene near the tomb. Not only that, but two disciples reported that he had also appeared to them as they were on the road to Emmaus. That made it even more unbelievable. How could Jesus be both at the tomb and on the road to Emmaus? Yes, I definitely was skeptical.

Then the Apostles insisted that Jesus had appeared to them while I was gone and had come right through the locked doors. They were jubilant, but I simply could not believe what they were telling me. I knew for sure that Jesus had died—a Roman soldier had even pierced his side with a spear—and no one was going to convince me that he was alive again.

So I said, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nail-marks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”

I told you that I’ve always had to see for myself, and this story just seemed ridiculous. I was convinced that all the other Apostles were hallucinating.

For a week, it seemed that I was right. Nothing else happened and we were talking about returning to Galilee. Then it happened. Jesus came right into the room where we were. He knew what I’d said to the Apostles because he told me to put my finger in his hands and my hand into his side.

“And do not be unbelieving, but believe,” he said.

Did I believe then? Absolutely! I could see him right there. I felt to my knees and said, “My Lord and my God!”

This couldn’t be just a man. How could a man conquer death? Jesus was God.

Jesus recognized the skepticism I had before I saw him. He said to me, “Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.”

That message was meant for you who are reading this account of the Resurrection.

That wasn’t the only time I saw the risen Lord. Later, seven of us—including Peter, James and John—were fishing on the Sea of Galilee when Jesus appeared on the shore. He told us to cast our nets on the right side of the boat. After we did, we caught 153 large fish. After we dragged them ashore, we had breakfast with Jesus.

Now you know why I’m called “doubting Thomas.” Yes, I did doubt at first. Rising from the dead just seemed impossible—and it is for anyone except God, which is why I expressed my faith that Jesus is my Lord and my God. I’ve devoted the rest of my life here in India to teaching the people about Jesus.

(Author’s note: Regarding the statement in the first sen- tence that Thomas’s original name was Judas, this is stated in the apocryphal Gospel of Thomas, an ancient Syriac version of the Gospel of John, and in a footnote in the New American Bible for John 11:16.)

(John F. Fink is editor emeritus of The Criterion.)
Easter: Walking with Christ heals our faults and character

By Elizabeth Rackover
Catholic News Service

Why doesn’t the resurrection of Jesus Christ stir the same excitement among Christians as the Lord’s birth at Christmas? Trappist Father Thomas Keating shared his thoughts on that question by telephone recently from St. Benedict’s Monastery in Snowmass, Colo. Father Keating is one of the architects of the Centering Prayer movement and a co-founder of Contemplative Outreach, Ltd.

“Christmas has a great deal of human interest and charm,” Father Keating said. “Everyone has or knows babies and has a great interest in them. Most people don’t have the remotest idea of Easter and what ‘resurrection’ might be, and to most people it is painful to think of the Passion and suffering.”

Father Keating expanded his definition of suffering to go beyond the scourging and Crucifixion.

“I’m more drawn to the spiritual and mental suffering of Jesus,” Father Keating said, “his rejection by his people and his disciples, the terrible suffering of identifying the psychological consequences of our sins.”

He said Jesus “identifies with the vast endless motion of human injustice, violence, indifference [and] brutality, the results of social sin.”

Warm and fuzzy, it isn’t. “Easter and the Passion require us to experience…a certain amount of disappointment and suffering ourselves,” Father Keating said. “There is a great deal to learn from suffering. We need the example and the experience that Jesus has given us of suffering.”

The Resurrection teaches us that suffering and death have been overcome, however devout, “but the real Christian life is about personal change and the dark side of human reality.”

Walking with Christ is a way of doing things.

“Mentally, it’s more powerful, more life-giving, more loving than Christmas,” Father Keating said. “Jesus rising from the dead,” he explained. “It’s fine to distract yourself with trivia, warm and fuzzy, it isn’t.”

“Easter and the Passion require us to experience…a certain amount of disappointment and suffering ourselves.”

Father Keating suggested that faith in the resurrection is “something that has to be developed by education and practice [because] nobody knows exactly what ‘resurrection’ is or what it means. “Jesus alone is the fruit of this mystery,” he said. “No one else has been resurrected or come back since Jesus, and that imposes a great deal of limitations on our understanding.”

Father Keating said he doesn’t think that the word “Easter” is a good name for the paschal mystery.

“The paschal mystery focuses on the extraordinary and triumphant character of Jesus rising from the dead,” he explained. “Mentally, it’s more powerful, more life-giving, more loving than Christmas, which anticipates the rhythm of Christ’s death and resurrection. But, in resurrection, he is raised as King of Kings, the Great Icon of Easter. To him is given all judgment, life and reward. In Jesus, humanity itself is glorified.”

Why, then, are we tempted to identify Easter with images of cute, fuzzy chicks and drawings of basket-carrying bunnies? “It’s fine to distract yourself with trivia, however devout,” Father Keating said, “but the real Christian life is about personal change and the dark side of human reality.”

Easter, the Great Origin of the Christian view of life, death and resurrection. But, in resurrection, he is raised as King of Kings, the Great Icon of Easter. To him is given all judgment, life and reward. In Jesus, humanity itself is glorified.”

Father Keating said he believes that the mystery of the Resurrection is a serious complication.

He said the word “mystery” provides insight into why Christians might even subconsciously gravitate more toward the commercial aspects of Easter.

“They think about the commercial aspects of Easter,” he said. “Really, we have to ‘learn’ about the Pasch and resurrection of Jesus,” he said, “and study the prophets and the great writers of the early Church and the great wisdom of the Christian contemporary tradition.”

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Walking that path is the way of healing. Walking with Christ heals our faults and character, and transforms us into the divine way of doing things.

“Through the gift of his own suffering and death,” he said, “Jesus teaches that death is the ultimate path to life—a kind of birth canal into eternal life. Birth is a symbol that life itself is a sort of wound, preparing us for the move into divine life. And that’s really what the Resurrection is all about: the transformation into divine life, the maximum participation in divine life.”

(Elizabeth Rackover is a freelance writer and catechist at St. Ignatius Parish in Rochester Hills, Mich.)
Love enables us to believe in Jesus’ resurrection

By Fr. W. Thomas Faucher

A lawyer friend who was born and raised Catholic told me that he has “lost his faith.” He challenged me to prove that Jesus rose from the dead.

Why do I believe in the Resurrection? Why do millions of Christians believe that he rose from the dead?

People who study the mind tell us that—between having something said to us and locking that something in our mind—there are filters that sift what we learn through all the other things we have learned in the past.

In theology, this process is called “hermeneutics.” Because of my hermeneutics, I have no difficulty believing that Jesus rose from the dead. It makes perfect sense to me, and then all the explanations fit right into my belief system.

In hermeneutics, I have no difficulty believing that Jesus rose from the dead. It makes perfect sense to me, and then all the explanations fit right into my belief system.

But some people reject all that is not totally rational, scientific and able to be proven without a doubt. If you cannot replicate the event in a laboratory experiment, they insist, it is not proven beyond doubt.

Consider Jesus’ rising from the dead. Why do I believe in the Resurrection?

For 2,000 years, Christians have tried to explain the origin of the Resurrection, the reason for the Resurrection and the power behind the Resurrection.

St. John tells us that “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8). Love makes all things possible.

That I can love and be loved is the origin of the Resurrection, the reason for the Resurrection and the power behind the Resurrection. St. John tells us that “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8). Love makes all things possible.

I believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead because it is the ultimate act of love.

St. Mary Parish in Boise, Idaho. (Father W. Thomas Faucher is pastor of St. Mary Parish in Boise, Idaho.) †
As Christians, are we an Easter people of praise?

By Jean Sweeney
Catholic News Service

Watch a child’s face as he or she discovers something new and you will see wonder, gratitude and praise.

Recently, I watched a young boy examine a fluorescent dragonfly then tug at his mother to get her to see this marvel. Finally, she paused and joined his awe, sighing, “God has designed such amazing creatures.” In their joint reaction, I experienced true praise. It seems that praise and gratitude are written into our very beings, but when we get blinded by our busyness we become less appreciative of God’s creation.

The Easter season is a good time to reflect on how praise is integrated into our busy schedules and lives. Are we a people of praise?

Getting everyone to Easter services, hiding the Easter eggs, finding baskets for candy and wearing something new to church to symbolize this season of renewal can leave us as stressed as we feel during other holidays. Are we so busy doing all that we think needs to get done that we do not notice what really lifts the heart and mind at Easter?

Our Easter Mass celebrations are filled with praise, song and gratitude. The Holy One who has shown us the face of God, and who redeemed and reconciled our lives, is alive and still with us. Alleluia!

Does the impact of this awareness touch our daily lives?

An Easter Vigil psalm says, “I will praise you, you have rescued me. ... Give praise to the Lord, you his faithful ones, and give thanks to his holy name” (Ps 30). It is presented almost as an instruction on how to live our lives, yet the bold attitude of giving praise is something that we Catholics often leave to evangelicals.

As a pastoral counselor, I have heard many tales of what is wrong in people’s families, in their work and in their relationships. The negative grabs our attention. We look for the worst. When we are hurt or are feeling pain, those feelings are central to our experience and must be acknowledged, but this is not the whole story of a person, even in hard times.

A woman with a serious type of cancer wrote to me about fighting for her life. Then she went on to say that she also had an alternative plan and was having fun planning her funeral service and the songs as well as attending to friendships. This is a woman of praise. She lifts her mind and heart to God even in difficult times.

In ordinary times, we get trained to look at what is wrong, to criticize, to make judgments and to compete with others. If we live this way, we will not be ready for the hard times.

It is a far cry from being a people of praise and gratitude, the people that God intended us to be.

Can we retrain ourselves to be people of gratitude, people of praise?

Each night, a client of mine wrote lists of things that she was grateful for. She said it took days to notice and write down the more subtle things, like a plant coming into bloom or the small kind exchange of words with a grocery store cashier. She praised God for these good things.

It seems that God’s request that we give praise and thanks in for our own well-being.

(“At Easter, it is a time to give thanks for all that is good in our lives,” Jean Sweeney, a licensed pastoral counselor and spiritual director in Arlington, Va.)

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Children’s Easter story: The empty tomb can teach us about friendship

By Janaan Manternach
Catholic News Service

Children’s Easter story: The empty tomb can teach us about friendship

Kylie kept thinking about the assignment from her religion teacher to read the Gospel story for Easter Sunday over and over until the students could come up with a creative way to retell it. The students were told not to discuss their ideas with each other. That was OK with Kylie because she hadn’t made any friends since coming to this new school. Actually, none of the children seemed to want to have anything to do with her. That was the part that hurt her the most.

Kylie wished she had friends like the ones who went to the tomb to be with Jesus. She was sure that no one at her school would go to her if she died. She tried not to think about that, but she couldn’t quite get it out of her mind.

Maybe that was the seed of a way for her to retell the Gospel story.

Their teacher told them how Jesus had died at the hands of a mob who hung him on a cross. She also told them about his burial in a tomb. The story they had to recreate was about what happened after that.

Kylie kept re-reading the Gospel story. The thought of Jesus’ friends made her happy, but she couldn’t seem to get much beyond that. So she decided to retell the story pretty much like it was in the Gospel, but from her own perspective.

“Jesus had died on Friday,” Kylie explained. “On Monday, Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Mary, the mother of James, took spices to Jesus’ tomb. On the way, they talked about their friendship with Jesus. ‘Mary Magdalene said that hardly anyone ever wanted to be her friend. Jesus befriended her when she was shunned by others. ‘Joanna said that she never had a problem having friends, but what she liked about Jesus was that anyone and everyone could be his friend. ‘Mary, James’ mother, told them that she became a friend of Jesus because of her son and that it was the best friendship she ever had.’

“They were now nearing the tomb and noticed that something was wrong. Jesus’ body was gone. The tomb was empty! ‘Puzzled and scared, they looked at each other and cried, ‘Where is Jesus? Where has he gone?’ ‘While they stood there in shock, two men in dazzling garments appeared. Frightened, they bowed their heads and stared at the ground.

Then the men spoke: ‘Why do you seek your friend among the dead? He isn’t here; he has been raised. Remember what he said to you while he was still in Galilee—the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners and be crucified, and will rise on the third day.’

‘They remembered the words, but hadn’t understood them. They talked to each other about how close they had been to Jesus and wondered how they could have missed what he told them. They knew they had to tell the Apostles and his other close friends about the empty tomb. ‘Peter decided to check into the story for himself. He ran to the tomb, bent down and saw the empty burial cloths. He stood there for a while and finally went home puzzled at what had happened.

“She added, “It helps me to know that the women knew what Peter would find. They also knew that Jesus was their friend; he would never abandon them. Jesus was alive!”

Kylie told her class that the story helped her to think more about Jesus and that something she especially liked was that he did not want her to think more about Jesus and that somehow he would never abandon her. She added, “It helps me to know that Jesus is my friend, too.”

(Janaan Manternach is a catechist in Dubuque, Iowa.)
The Last Supper: Jesus teaches us importance of sharing meals

By Allan F. Wright
Catholic News Service

I often ask people to reminisce about the most significant meal they have ever eaten. It is never the food that makes the most impact in their memory, but the people sharing the meal with them.

Whatever the occasion, whatever the cultural norm dictates, it rings true to human experience that meals bring people together.

Jesus’ Middle Eastern culture was one in which only those considered family would be welcomed around the table. The people one dined with defined the boundaries of one’s relationships.

There are no fewer than 58 references to food, eating, hunger or meals in the Gospel of Luke alone. In fact, Jesus is so involved with sharing his teachings and enjoying the fellowship of sinners around the table that he is accused of being “a glutton and a drunkard” (Lk 7:34).

The meal that Jesus shares with Zacchaeus, the tax collector, is a sign that repentance has taken place and that a celebration is required despite the murmurings of the crowd (Lk 19:1-9).

When Jesus enters Simon’s house as a guest in a story in the Gospel of Luke, he is not given any basic gesture of hospitality by Simon. Jesus, however, allows a repentant, sinful woman to offer a costly demonstration of unexpected love at his feet (Lk 7:36-50).

Jesus takes this opportunity to teach Simon by way of a parable during the meal. Jesus is correcting Simon’s self-righteousness by conveying the simple message that if the Son of Man goes out to invite the younger son and goes out to welcome him home with peace. The father also goes out to invite the older son as well. The family is not complete until the older son accepts his seat around the table (Lk 15:11-31).

In the parable of the Prodigal Son, the celebration begins in the home. A fatted calf could feed up to 75 people, and the message here is that it is a community celebration of the father who welcomes his son back home with open arms. The father takes the initiative with the younger son and goes out to welcome him home with peace. The father also goes out to invite the older son as well. The family is not complete until the older son accepts his seat around the table (Lk 15:11-31).

Jesus would not use his miraculous power to feed himself when he was hungry and tempted by Satan, but when he sees the hunger of the 5,000, he multiplies the loaves and fish so that others are fed (Lk 9:10-17). The Last Supper is a way for Jesus to share his very life around the table with friends. This significant event was not lost on the early Christians, who gathered around the table to share in the Eucharist (1 Cor 11).

Likewise, it was during a meal around a simple table in a home that the disciples’ eyes were opened to the risen Lord in their midst. Sharing a meal can be difficult in our fast-paced world. Often, our vehicles have more cup holders than we have place settings for our dining room tables. Nonetheless, sharing food can still bring a family, community and friends together. Like Jesus, they too can share their lives—their stories, hopes and joys—by the simple act of sharing a meal.


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Growing in faith

Baking Easter cookies as a family can be a fun holiday tradition

By Cori Fugere Urban
Catholic News Service

Slide over Christmas cookies. Easter cookies with spring colors, fun shapes and biblical symbolism are gaining popularity.

Bouquets of sugar dough cutouts of flowers, gingerbread Easter bunnies, chocolate and shredded wheat “nests” filled with jellybean “eggs,” and Easter story cookies are on the to-do lists of many Easter bakers.

Ask Chef Lonny W. Ricketts for an Easter cookie recipe, and he is quick to oblige with a sugar cookie recipe sure to keep a baker busy making loads of cookies.

At the end of the usual mixing, rolling, cutting, baking and frosting directions, the self-described “Catholic chef” adds one final instruction: “Don’t forget to bring three cookies to your priest.”

Ricketts is the chef instructor at William Dean Technical School in Holyoke, Mass., and chairman of the board of the Pioneer Valley Chefs Association.

He said that although many people have never heard of Easter cookies, this Easter is a good time for your family to start the tradition.

Getting started is easy. Magazines in the checkout aisle of local grocery stores have lots of ideas. Or search the Internet for “Easter cookies.”

One recipe easily found online that Ricketts recommends is for “Easter Story Cookies,” and the list of ingredients is topped with a Bible.

As you put the ingredients together to make the meringue cookies, you can read about how they relate to Jesus’ Passion. Breaking pecans symbolizes how Jesus was beaten. Adding the vinegar calls to mind the drink that Jesus was given when he thirsted on the cross. The egg whites—eggs are a symbol of life—call to mind the fact that Jesus gave his life for us.

Other ingredients are added with pertinent Bible readings, and the uncooked cookie dough is left overnight in a warm oven.

Ricketts, who is a member of Our Lady of Czestochowa Parish in Turners Falls, Mass., also suggests a simple butter cookie recipe that can be adapted for any holiday, including Easter.

There are plenty of cookie cutters with Easter symbols: eggs, lambs, chicks and crosses. If you do not have any cookie cutters, Ricketts suggests drawing a cross on a manila paper folder, cutting it out and using it as a template when cutting the sugar cookie dough.

Or you may want to try a simple Easter cookie: Make chocolate chip cookie dough, but instead of adding chocolate chips, add pastel-colored, candy-covered chocolate chips to the mix.

Donna Tozloski, an avid baker from Our Lady of Peace Parish in Turners Falls, Mass., once made wedding cakes as a business.

Tozloski said making cutout cookies are fun because they can be personalized and are a good project for children. “Kids like to help decorate,” she said, adding that making Easter cookies helps children get ready for Easter and the cookies’ symbolism is “something [that children] can contribute to the Easter dinner.”

Whatever cookie project you select, what matters is not the artistic quality of the product. “It’s [about] time well spent if you’re together” with family and friends, Ricketts said. “It’s not what you make or even how you make it. It’s [all about] doing it together, and having fun and growing closer.”

(Cori Fugere Urban is a staff reporter for The Vermont Catholic Tribune.)
Easter offers a new beginning for people of faith.

By Edward P. Hahnenberg

We love happy endings. In fact, we expect them. From the earliest stories that we read as children to the movies and TV shows that we watch today, we have come to expect a happy ending. The hero defeats the villain. The guy gets the girl or the girl gets the guy. The family crisis or complicated crime is resolved or solved before the closing credits scroll across the screen.

I have trouble remembering the details of many movies that I’ve seen partly because they all seem to end the same way. Rarely are we surprised. We start most stories knowing how they will end.

Easter is that time of the year when Christians celebrate the ultimate happy ending. On this day, we recall the story of Jesus’ death and resurrection. But it is a story we have heard so many times that we wonder if we really hear it anymore.

We start the story knowing how it will end. No surprises here. Has the Good News of the Resurrection been dulled by this predictable pattern?

It was not always this way. For the first disciples, the Resurrection was a shocking surprise. Even though Jesus had warned them of what was to come, they still did not believe the news that Mary Magdalene brought: “He is alive!”

The Resurrection was not just unexpected. It was a radical new beginning. Christianity has rejected the idea that Jesus appeared to his friends as a mere ghost or a figment of their imagination. The Gospels have Jesus inviting others to touch his wounds. He eats fish to prove that he is not a mirage. The Gospels have Jesus inviting others to touch his wounds. He eats fish to prove that he is not a mirage.

The Resurrection was not just unexpected. It was a radical new beginning. Christianity has rejected the idea that Jesus appeared to his friends as a mere ghost or a figment of their imagination. The Gospels have Jesus inviting others to touch his wounds. He eats fish to prove that he is not a mirage.

But the Church also teaches that Jesus’ ressurection was not resurrection. He was not raised from the dead like Lazarus or Jarius’ daughter—their new earthly lives still were shadowed by the fact that they would one day die.

Jesus does not return to earthly life and to the “good old days” of his ministry. Instead, he passes beyond space and time (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #646).

It is hard to describe this in words. The Gospels tell of Jesus coming to the disciples through locked doors. His closest friends do not recognize him at first. He later vanishes from their sight.

Throughout these stories of the Resurrection is a profound sense of newness. It is Jesus, but he is transformed. New life is not like the old.

The Resurrection starts something, a new era in human history and new life in each of us. Movies about Jesus get it wrong when they turn the Resurrection into a happy ending. It is really a happy beginning!

One film that gets it right is Peer Porslin’s The Gospel According to St. Matthew, released in 1964. In Pasolini’s depiction of the Resurrection, the drums and joyful Gloria of the Congolese “Missa Luba” burst through the soundtrack and the camera chases the disciples running toward the risen Lord. You feel like you’re running with them and are caught up in their excitement and joy. It is the end of the story, but the start of something wonderful.

Jesus Christ is risen today! We sing it every Easter. Jesus is risen! Today! What does the newness of the risen Lord tell us about our own journeys through death and resurrection?

New life is not like the old. The Resurrection reminds us that in our own struggles with death—whether the literal death of a loved one, the slow suffering of illness or the daily deaths of disappointment, discouragement and failure—we are called by God to hope for a truly new future.

This future is not a return to the past. We will never be Lazarus, returning to the way things were. Instead, we join the risen Christ and step toward a new future with new experiences, new possibilities and new life.

We do not know quite what it will look like to survive our present struggles. The pain is real. But the risen Lord gives us confidence to hope. Through this pain, something new is being born.

Ever since the birth of our first child, I have thought how appropriate birth is as a metaphor for the Resurrection. Everyone told my wife and me that when the baby comes nothing ever will be the same. It is true. Our new life is not like the old.

For each of our children, my wife kept a journal and carefully wrote out each birth story. We have been blessed in that each story ended happily. It is so obvious to us, as we watch our children grow, that the happy endings were just the beginning.

The Resurrection is not the end of the story. It is the beginning. In Benedictine Sister Genevieve Glen's beautiful Easter hymn “The Sun Arose in Clouds of Fire,” the women run from the tomb and sing of this new beginning: “Death, death has died—now all is birth!”


The Resurrection is a new beginning

By David Gibson

Have we heard the story of Christ’s resurrection so many times that it has lost its intended impact on us?

For the earliest Christians, the Resurrection was an amazing event that signified the start of a new creation.

Pope Benedict XVI explained this in a 2006 homily.

“Christ’s resurrection happened the first day of the week, which in the Scriptures is the day of the world’s creation,” the pope explained. “For this very reason, Sunday was considered by the early Christian community as the day on which the new world began, the one on which ... the new creation began.”

To really understand the significance of the word “resurrection” today, it helps to revisit this notion of a “new creation” and a “new beginning.”

The Resurrection announces a new era. Its dominant forces enable us to hope, to believe and to love.

(David Gibson edits Faith Alive!)
From the Editor Emeritus/John F Fink

Perspectives

The criterion is the crux of the whole matter

I wish I could take credit for the pun in the headline over this column, but I can’t. The great K. T. Wallis, when he pointed out, in his masterpiece The Easter Parade, that Jesus Christ’s crucifixion stands at the center of human history, the dogma that God died, sacrificing himself to atone for our sins, has become the crux of the entire mystery of the Christian faith. St. Paul said that Jesus was the One who “spoke in the Crucifixion, telling the Corinthians, ‘I resolved to know nothing while I was with you, except Jesus Christ and him crucified’” (1 Cor 2:2). To the Philippians, he quoted an early Christian hymn that proclaimed that Jesus “himself became obedient to death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2:8). St. Paul told the Gentiles why he did and why: “He gave himself for our sakes that he might rescue us from the present evil age in accord with the will of our God and Father” (Gal 1:4).

So Jesus died to his death was simply leading to his real purpose in life. Chesterton pointed out, “The primary thing about Jesus was not what he did, but that he was to do what he was to do. He was going to do other things equally definite and objective; we might almost say equally external and material. But from the first to the last, the most definite fact is that he is going to do.”

Definitely Jesus is not God. He has not avoided this cruel death. As he himself said, “Do you think that I cannot call upon my Father and he will provide me with angels to support me?” (Mt 26:53). He tells us why he does not ask for “What should I say to you? Save me from this hour?” But it was for this purpose that I came to this hour” (Jn 18:33).

He suffered his agony in the garden, knowing what was about to happen. He wouldn’t have been fully human if he hadn’t prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me,” but he added, “Yet, not as I will, but as you will” (Mt 26:39).

We shouldn’t, however, say that God the Father willed the Crucifixion. What God willed was our redemption. He permitted the crucifixion as the price that had to be paid by sin. It was indeed a cruel death, what the first-century historian Josephus called “the most wretched of deaths.” It was the method of execution begun by the ancient Persians, and perfected by both the Carthaginians and the Romans.

The crowd yelled, “If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross!” (Mt 27:41). They could not save himself!” (Mt 27:42). Having accepted his Father’s will, Jesus accepts these provocations which seem to undermine the whole meaning of his mission, his teaching, his miracles. He wields it all.

And so the God-man died for us. Why? Because “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” (Jn 3:16).

That is the goal of politics, of ‘the things that belong to Caesar.’ But heaven’s reign makes deeper and broader demands, the demands not only of justice but of love.

Wills continued. “[St.] Augustine knew that the highest human faculty is love, the self-emptying love of Jesus, and he quoted Jesus speaking in John’s Gospel: ‘A new instruction I have given them, love one another. All will know that you are my followers by this sign alone, that you have love for one another’” (Jn 13:34:35).

Symbols of joy, hope and rebirth help us begin to understand the meaning of Easter. But when we mature, we also contemplate the great love which has come into our lives through family, friends, nature, intellectual delight or just the kindness of strangers. The symbols also warn us how we might become detached from the Vine, as in the parables of the wheat and chaff being separated at harvest time, or the net full of fish which must be sorted out at the hour.

He wrote, “Jesus’ followers have the obligation that rests on all men and women: to seek justice based on the dignity of every human being.

The reign of heaven is at hand

Cynthia Dewes

Cornucopia

There was a time when Easter most likely meant fuzzy chics, jellybeans and dressing up for Mass. Of course, the Easter bonnet also meant those things, and that’s great as far as it goes.

But over time on our spiritual journey, Easter is revealed to us as the splendid and climactic mystery: It is the literal vision of God appeared to us imperfect creatures as one of us in order to teach us perfection. And then he sacrificed himself, is one of the dogma that God died, sacrificing himself to atone for our sins, has become the crux of the entire mystery of the Christian faith.

Easter. But when we mature, we also contemplate the great love which has come into our lives through family, friends, nature, intellectual delight or just the kindness of strangers. The symbols also warn us how we might become detached from the Vine, as in the parables of the wheat and chaff being separated at harvest time, or the net full of fish which must be sorted out at the hour.

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Faith, Hope and Charity/David Siler

Evangelization

In December 2005, you may remember reading about Charlene Booker, a 49-year-old, single mother relocated to Indianapolis from New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina. She can be reached at www.CriterionOnline.com for the story...

Charlene recently called to me that after having seen the latest list of confirmed deceased babies, she could count 60 people from her own extended family and friends and acquaintances—including her own husband. Charlene’s story is certainly one of her own amazing faith, but it is also a story about our own wonderful Catholic Church. We provide tangible and tangible work to help people everyday for all human needs: spiritual, educational, vocational, clothing, housing and emotional support.

Charlene and her children came to Indianapolis with little more than the clothes on their backs. St. Rita parishioners rallied to help the family find clothing and other basic necessities. It is indeed a cruel death, what the first-century historian Josephus called “the most wretched of deaths.” It was the method of execution begun by the ancient Persians, and perfected by both the Carthaginians and the Romans.

The triumph of the Resurrection is the crux of our Christian faith. Even the crux of our Christian faith. Even the crux of our Christian faith. Even the crux of our Christian faith. Even the crux of our Christian faith.
The Sunday Readings

Sunday, April 8, 2007

- Colossians 3:1-4
- John 20:1-9

The Church celebrates the Easter Vigil late in the evening on Holy Saturday. These readings are those read during the Masses on Easter Sunday.

For its first reading on this extraordinary feast of Christian faith, the Church presents us with a passage from the Acts of the Apostles. Acts is, in effect, a continuation of St. Luke’s Gospel. Scholars say that this Gospel and Acts were the work of the same author. Beginning with the Ascension, Acts reports what life was like for the infant community of Christians in Jerusalem and then it recalls the initial spread of Christianity.

Important in the early chapters of Acts is a series of sermons delivered by Peter. Always, Peter spoke for the survivors. In this sermon, Peter briefly gives a synopsis of the life of Jesus. Sent by God, Jesus was crucified, the victim of human scheming. He rose after death. He commissioned the Apostles to continue the work of reconciling God and humanity. The Apostles were witnesses of all that Jesus did.

The Epistle to the Colossians, the second reading, places Christ at God’s right hand. It says that Christians already have “been raised” because they have taken Christ into their hearts. Having given themselves to Jesus, they have died to earthy things and to earthly ideas.

In the process, they have been drawn into the eternal life of the Risen Lord. True believers will live with Jesus eternally. St. John’s Gospel supplies the last reading.

John’s Gospel goes into some detail about the Resurrection and its aftermath. The first figure mentioned in the story is Mary Magdalene. She was a beloved figure about the Resurrection and its aftermath.

Reflection

The Church excitedly tells us that the Lord lives. He rose from the dead. It is a proclamation of the greatest and central belief of the Church, namely that Jesus, the Son of God, overcame even death.

However, the lessor is more than simply to affirm once again the Church’s teaching on the Resurrection—the actual and physical resurrection of Christ. It calls upon us to read.

Such was the message in Colossians, the second reading. Such is the important lesson in the references to Mary Magdalene, Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved. They had to believe. They had to have faith. We must be open to God ourselves.

Limited and bruised by sin, we must be healed and strengthened to receive the grace of faith. Happily, Lenten penances these past weeks have healed and strengthened us, and made within us this openness.

In the meantime, the Church shares with us the testimony of Peter and the Apostles, not just bystanders as the mission of Jesus occurred, but rather the Lord’s specially commissioned agents to tell us about our own salvation. Their testimony, so guarded by the Church, is our avenue to knowing and meeting the Risen Christ.

Readers may submit prose or poetry for faith column

The Criterion invites readers to submit original prose or poetry relating to faith or experiences of prayer for possible publication in the “My Journey to God” column. Seasonal reflections also are appreciated. Please include name, address, parish and telephone number with submissions.

Send material for consideration to “My Journey to God,” The Criterion, P.O. Box 1777, Indianapolis, IN 46206 or e-mail to criterion@archindy.org

Question Corner/Fr. John Dietzen

God created all people, even terrorists, out of divine love

Q

I believe Catholic teaching is that the idea of suicide bombers is totally wrong and that anyone who commits such a crime is going to hell.

We now know that they are using the Internet to recruit these people, and we should do all we can to counter them.

Why doesn’t the Church preach more about these sinful actions?

A

While suicide is an objectively sinful act, and deliberately killing innocent people while committing suicide is particularly wrong, I am not clear why you think more Catholic homilies against suicide bombing will act to extremists with any influence.

One point in your letter, however, which I know is shared by many Catholics, deserves comment. I am not qualified to explain Islamic beliefs on suicide bombing, but Catholic teaching has some valuable things to say about the eternal destiny of those who commit such crimes.

Contra to the assumptions of many, the Catholic Church holds that all persons who sincerely attempt to follow their own consciences, what they believe to be right and good, are saved. This concept is well entrenched in Church teaching. It applies to everyone, not just to those whose religious theories enjoy our blessing.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says it clearly: “Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience—these too may achieve eternal salvation” (#847).

Pope John Paul II elaborated on this in his 1999 Day of Peace message on Jan. 1, 1999. Speaking of religious freedom, he concluded, “People are obliged to follow their conscience in all circumstances and cannot be forced to act against it.”

All these assumptions, of course, a diligent and honest attempt to follow one’s conscience with all the prayer and wisdom possible, and then to live one’s life in accord with what is seen as “religious duty,” however the individual sees that duty.

More than a few American religious leaders publicly proclaim that all dead terrorists are in hell, and that all still alive will end up there. It does not at all dilute or deny the hideous evil of terrorist actions (or our right and obligation to oppose them in any moral way possible) to reply that religiousarrowed actions has the lofty virtue of any thoughtful follower of Jesus Christ.

Judgments about the condition and fate of other people’s souls are wholly beyond our reach. To pretend we have sufficient knowledge and wisdom to make such judgments invades territory that belongs to God alone.

God created all of us, terrorists included, out of love. And Jesus, as St. Paul says, died for each of us. It is blasphemous to deny to God which of his or her children he will reject or to tell Jesus which of those people that he died for must be condemned.

To be sure, none of any or no religion is capable of rejecting God and his law by a deliberate, radical, eternal choice of evil over good.

But that is the whole story.

We must also admit our complete ignorance of how God’s grace and truth may have transformed a person, terrorist or anyone else, not only during his or her life, but also during his or her last moments. It is our radical belief that God performs incredible miracles and transformations in life.

Who knows what took place in these events? We do not know, of course, and will not know the answer until the completion of history.

It is with these instincts of faith and hope, however, aware that we all desperately need his mercy, that the Church has us pray just after the consecration at Mass that God will bring our departed “brothers and sisters, and all the departed,” all the people in the world who have died, into the light of his presence (Eucharistic Prayer II).

(A free brochure in English or Spanish, answering questions that Catholics ask about baptism practices and sponsors, is available by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Father John Dietzen, Box 3315, Peoria, IL 61612. Questions may be sent to Father Dietzen at the same address or by e-mail in care of jdietzen@arcd.com.)
VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The Vatican released a complete catalog of DVDs documenting the life and death of Pope John Paul II, the papal transition of 2005 and the Second Vatican Council as well as what goes on behind Vatican City’s walls.

To mark the second anniversary of the death of Pope John Paul and the election of Pope Benedict XVI, the Vatican television center presented a full-color, two-page catalog showcasing the seven DVD collections for sale. Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, Vatican spokesman, said at a March 27 press conference that the collection is unique “because CTV [Vatican television center] cameramen can get close to the pope,” and capture images and events that other television crews cannot.

For example, the hour-long documentary “Benedict XVI: The Keys of the Kingdom” starts out giving the viewer a ride in the backseat of the popemobile. The camera peers over Pope John Paul’s shoulder and shows crowds waving to him as the pope is driven home from Rome’s Gemelli hospital a few weeks before his death on April 2, 2005.

Viewers also are given privileged peeks of the Sistine Chapel where voting for the new pope took place, workers erecting the smoke stack that would tell the world with a puff of white smoke that a pope had been elected, and the cardinals’ living quarters during the papal transition.

Accompanied by detailed and colorful commentary, there is also footage of the newly elected Pope Benedict walking up to the closed red curtain moments before he was presented to the world from the central balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica. There is also footage of the joyous celebrations the new pope encountered on the streets when he returned to his old apartment to greet neighbors and friends.

The seven DVDs produced by the Vatican television center currently are for sale to the public are:

• “Benedict XVI: The Keys of the Kingdom,” which documents the papal transition in 2005.

• “John Paul II: The Pope Who Made History,” which condenses his life and papacy onto one disc.

• “John Paul II: This Is My Story,” which features the late pope narrating the most significant events of his life.

• “John Paul II: Seasons of the Apostle,” which follows the pope’s bold initiatives and courageous mission that never waned over the years even during his illness.

• “The Vatican: Behind the Scenes of the World’s Smallest Kingdom,” which shows the day-to-day life behind the city’s walls.

• “The II Vatican Council” showing special archived footage and interviews with religious leaders explaining the council’s reforms.

The multilingual DVDs are available online at www.bdhcommunications.com (the official distributor of the Vatican DVDs). www.amazon.com and www.ebay.it.

Vatican to broadcast papal events in high definition television

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Keeping in step with the fast pace of communications technology, the Vatican television center is to begin broadcasting in high definition.

The first papal event to be aired using the new format will be a special on April 15 of a Mass celebrating Pope Benedict XVI’s April 16 birthday.

“We’ve realized that if we want to continue to do a good job of broadcasting footage of the pope to other television stations, we have to be ready for the day,” when high definition is expected to become the norm in television broadcasting, said Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, the Vatican spokesman and head of the Vatican television center, or CTV.

CTV, which is in charge of producing, broadcasting and archiving filmed Vatican and papal events, must keep up with new technology, said Father Federico. If they don’t keep up, “people won’t be able to see the pope anymore” on their television screens, he said.

After April 15, the center gradually will start to broadcast regular Vatican events in high definition, while the major events will be aired using the new technology.

High-definition television, or HDTV, is a digital broadcasting system for television that offers greater resolution and a sharper image than found in standard formats.

Father Federico said the capability would allow CTV to provide papal event coverage to the many high-definition television broadcasters around the world that are hungry for programming.

CTV also will begin archiving all new footage filmed in high definition to produce high quality documentaries on DVD, he said.

Vatican employees to celebrate pope’s birthday with day off and bonus

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Vatican employees will celebrate Pope Benedict XVI’s 80th birthday with a day off from work and a fatter paycheck, said an announcement from a top Vatican official.

April 16 will be a holiday for all Vatican workers, said March 27 statement from Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Vatican secretary of state. Employees also will receive about $667 more in that week’s paycheck to mark the celebration.

Pope Benedict will begin his birthday celebrations early by saying a special Mass on April 15 at St. Peter’s Basilica.

The Vatican also marks as holidays April 19, the day of the pope’s 2005 election, and the “name day” of the pope on March 19, the feast day of St. Joseph, because Pope Benedict’s birth name is Joseph Ratzinger.
Archdiocesan Catholics give aid to the Church in the Holy Land

By Sean Gallagher

As Catholics across central and southern Indiana gather in churches for the solemn liturgies of the Easter Triduum, they will be invited to recall the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus that took place in Jerusalem nearly 2,000 years ago.

While they’re doing that here in Indiana, other Catholics who live in the Holy Land will be doing the same.

However, the number of Christians who live in the place where Jesus and his disciples walked—and where the faith came to be—has dropped precipitously over the past several decades, in part because of the political and economic turmoil that has wrecked the region for so long.

Over the past 12 years, the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land has taken action to make the place where Jesus died and rose again a land of opportunity for the Christians who live there by supporting their education and helping them find housing and jobs.

And many archdiocesan Catholics are joining the foundation’s efforts to support what Franciscan Father Peter Vasko, the foundation’s president, called “the mother Church.”

“Our religious roots and heritage comes from Jerusalem,” said Father Peter during a recent visit to Indianapolis. “Without the Church of Jesus Christ there for the first time, there would be no Church in Cincinnati or Indianapolis or Tokyo or New York.”

Whether he is leading pilgrimages in Israel or traveling in the United States, Father Peter is constantly meeting Catholics, some of whom have a longstanding love for the Holy Land or who are coming to learn about the Church there for the first time.

“It’s very exciting to meet more and more Catholics who once they hear it, want to do something about it,” he said. “It’s a wonderful opportunity, not only to tell the story but to see the love that they have for the Church in the Holy Land.”

Husband and wife Dan Crowe and Ruth Stanley, members of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis, met Father Peter during a pilgrimage they took to the Holy Land last November.

While they were there, they viewed and prayed at many of Christianity’s holiest places and met Christians who live there.

Shortly after returning home, Crowe and Stanley decided to participate in the foundation’s Child Sponsorship Program, which provides tuition support for students in Church-run grade schools in the Holy Land.

“It was very rewarding to be able to … recognize that maybe, in some small way, we could help to educate this child through graduation,” Crowe said.

“It really caught our imagination, that without some care, Christianity could disappear from Israel,” Stanley said.

“And, if you think about that, we would be visiting tourist sites rather than living places,” Crowe said.

In addition to leading them to give support to the Church in the Holy Land, Crow and Stanley’s pilgrimage has also had a continued spiritual impact on their lives from Advent onward.

“Many of the scripture readings just came alive in my mind [in Advent and Christmas],” Stanley said, “and so the same thing is happening with Lent and now coming into Holy Week.”

Father Peter said that pilgrimages taken by American Catholics to the Holy Land not only benefit them, but are helpful to the Christians who live there.

“They want to meet American Catholics,” he said. “They appreciate the fact that we’re helping out with their education, getting jobs and building apartments. But they want to see the people.”

In part, the Christians there want to see the people who have given them support because that support, according to Father Peter, is starting to make a difference.

Over the time that the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land has supported Christian college students there, 130 have earned degrees and 65 percent of them are now working in a number of professional fields. Much of the remainder is made up of women who have gotten married and chosen to be stay-at-home mothers.

“It’s the beginning of something,” Father Peter said.

“And so [because of] the hard work of the last 12 years that the foundation has been doing, we’re seeing some light at the end of the tunnel.”

(For more information about the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land, log on to www.fhh.org or call toll free 866-905-3787.)

Palm fronds figure prominently in Holy Land’s Palm Sunday procession history

JERUSALEM (CNS)—Each year, thousands of pilgrims, locals, tourists and clergy gather for the traditional Palm Sunday procession, retracing Jesus’ steps from the Mount of Olives to the Old City of Jerusalem. They wave palm fronds, commemorating the palm fronds Jesus’ followers placed along his path.

In Jesus’ times, the palm frond was a symbol of victory, and placement along the pathway of someone considered worthy of this honor suggested a celebration and triumph.

In the Old Testament, Joshua was also given this honor, and palm fronds play an important role in some Jewish holiday rituals.

Date palms figure prominently in the famous Madaba mosaic map, which depicts holy sites in the Holy Land and is now located in Jordan.

The date palm was considered a staple in the Judean desert, providing food, shelter and shade. It was recognized as a symbol of the kingdom of Judea and, because of it, the city of Jericho was a major population center. Many believe that the honey mentioned in the Bible is date honey.

After they conquered the land and expelled the Jews from the area of Judea, there is evidence that the Romans destroyed many of the trees and did not take care of those which remained, said Arnon Greenberg, head of research and development of the Jewish National Fund, which is involved in the reintroduction of the date palm into the area.

In 2005, Elaine Solowey, a specialist on indigenous fruit trees for the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies, planted three date palm seedlings found 20 years earlier at Herod the Great’s palace. One of the seeds sprouted and has continued to grow slowly, sprouting fronds.

Many date palms growing in Israel come from side shoots of Deglet Noor date trees smuggled in from Iraq and Iran in the early 1900s and later the juicer Medjool dates from Algeria and Morocco by way of California in the 1960s, Greenberg said.

Until recently the cultivation and harvesting of the dates remained much the same as it was in biblical times, he said. But in the past 20 years, research has helped introduce advanced technology such as the pollination of female date trees with the aid of airplanes, a mechanical shaker that makes the harvest 10 times quicker and more efficient by only bringing down the already mature fruit, and a natural freezing process that creates a longer shelf life for the fruit, he said.

Hear Father MITCH PACWA

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Please submit in writing to our office by 10 a.m. Thursday before the week of publication; be sure to state date of death. Obituaries of archdiocesan priests serving our archdiocese are listed elsewhere in The Criterion. Order priests and religious sisters and brothers are included here, unless they are natives of the archdiocese or have other connections to it; they are not obituaries on this page.

Headline: Rest in peace

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The Criterion

Friday, April 6, 2007

LEGACY FOR OUR Mission: For Our Children and the Future

Catholic Charities Food Bank Seeks to Meet Growing Demand

Mary many people associate soup kitchens with the bleak days of the Great Depression. But these facilities, along with other outreach efforts, are far more common than many believe. In fact, many say that the need for such services cannot exist today in our country, the land of plenty. But in Terre Haute, Indiana, that is very much and growing. The for Our Mission campaign seeks to meet these needs.

The Catholic Charities Terre Haute Food Bank gathers and distributes nearly 2 million pounds of food annually to its 90 members agencies including soup kitchens, church food pantries, community centers, senior housing programs, youth day care centers, churches, youth residential facilities and other community agencies in seven west-central Indiana counties. The food bank, opened in 1980, is part of a national food collection and distribution program.

The facility is vital, John Etling explained, since it helps determine how much the program can assist people in need in the Wabash Valley: people who are already facing challenges to the local economy brought on by the departure of manufacturing plants—and jobs—from the area and the increasing use of drugs that is pushing families into poverty.

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At the inception of each of these programs was John E. Etling, who ended with his retirement in 2005. His son, John C., today carries on the Etling tradition as agency director. In addition to the food bank, it operates several charitable facilities and programs for seniors and a housing and assistance program for seniors.

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Catholic Charities – an Etling Family Tradition

Catholic Charities Terre Haute is an agency that provides a variety of services needed in the Wabash Valley people who are poor, homeless, elderly and neglected youth. In addition to the food bank, it operates several charitable facilities and programs for seniors and a housing and assistance program for seniors. They are the reason for the success of this program, said director. In addition to the food bank, the agency operates several charitable facilities and programs for seniors and a housing and assistance program for seniors. They are the reason for the success of this program, said director.

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